

Orleans Shellfish & Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, April 12, 2011

ORLEANS TOWN CLERK
K. O'Neil, ASST
'11 SEP 7 4:16PM

Attendance: Don Baker (Chairman), Mark Mathison (Vice-chair), Judy Scanlon, Bill Mitchell, Jack Moran, Richard Tyldesley, David Slack, Dave Dunsford (Selectmen Liaison). Also: Sandy MacFarlane (Guest Speaker) & Judith Bruce (Concerned Citizen).

The meeting was brought to order by Don at 7:00 PM.

Sandy, previously invited by the Board to discuss options to enhancing the town's wild shellfisheries, proceeded with her presentation:

The biology requires adults for babies & babies for adults. Learning how not to kill the animals is any hatchery persons goal. Financial commitment is necessary for at least a decade. Pleasant Bay takes 5-7 years for a mature quahog while Wellfleet takes as little as 2 years. We have 45 miles of shoreline, a great resource. Unfortunately, interest in shellfish has dwindled partly due to a decline in productivity. Shellfish enhancement can't compete with other departments in town. An emotional commitment is necessary for success.

A couple of avenues to enhancement which might not overburden the Town's resources are:

1. Non-profit corps. Such as the Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group headed up by Rick Karney. Operates with a budget of around \$100,000, runs a hatchery program for clams & scallops, & raises revenue through grants & fund raising.
2. "Shellfish Gardening", practiced on Long Island, N.J. & VA among other states. The arrangements differ by jurisdiction though private labor is the backbone. Our state shellfish officials are not enthusiastic about it because there might be people and product "all over the place" without supervision. It would need to operate under the auspices of the Shellfish Dept. but our Dept is "stretched too thin". Turnover in town might be excessive for success. A co-coordinator is required. A tough job.
3. Upwellers: 11 of 15 towns operate upwellers to jump start seed and reduce seed cost. Harwich uses volunteers (students).

David's quest for answers as to lack of productivity are illusive and hard to tell. Bottom can change rapidly and there are environmental factors we aren't close to understanding. Enhancement can take the form of concentrating efforts in one area or spreading out to encompass more habitat. Sandy handed out studies she has published on municipal management of scallops and quahogs.

Bill asked about gregarious setting mentioning that Eastham has had some success in wild oyster spat setting. Sandy said Eastham has had a serious enhancement program for many years & that quahogs particularly required gregarious setting.

Don said he could easily make a day's pay 30 years ago shell fishing. Are those days gone? Sandy replied that we have too many people, water bodies are struggling and we don't know how to improve the situation. Some 40 years ago we had huge sets of quahogs in Big Bay along the Rte. 28 rim. Nobody knows why the bay experienced such a set. Spawning sanctuaries can help attain critical mass. Some species require critical mass, others do not require such gregariousness.

Don said he perceived disconnect between propagation & harvesting. Sandy: Chatham has a dedicated propagation program funded through license purchases.

Don: need lots of people shell fishing to raise interest. Free non-commercial licenses?

Mark: government and landowners are restricting access. Sandy pointed out the education value of people's participation in shell fishing and raising shell fish. She mentioned the Milford Aquaculture Seminar as combining both commercial and researchers' interests.

Don: appears to be a case of believers vs. the indifferents. Need to motivate the indifferent by structuring a shell fish propagation program as a partial solution to our pollution problems. Fund raising is necessary. Sandy: need to partner with other organizations & need someone to run the program.

Jack proposed a Sea Call Farm type program.

Judith Bruce said in the early 80's everybody shell fished but not now. The rest of the town isn't interested. We need to build interest in shell fish & clean water. We should try to avoid Phase 6 & use the money for propagation. Sandy remarked on the success of Eastham's Salt Pond largely due to the efforts of Phil Schwind and Henry Lind.

Mark wondered if the Orleans Conservation Trust could be enlisted but David Dunsford indicated that existing law might preclude its participation.

Rich said he couldn't sell the idea as currently formulated. Why do it? What's the goal? Sandy: it would need to be sanctioned by Dawson but not his day to day responsibility.

Jack asked what species to raise to show results. Sandy: oysters would be first choice, 2nd would be quahogs.

Bill asked if expert participation like Woods Hole might answer some questions about Pleasant Bay. Sandy expressed skepticism due to the complex nature of the ecosystem.

Rich: still need a goal. Need to talk to Karney and shell fish gardening people. Judy: start with a pilot program. Don: An objective of the next meeting could be to clarify objectives, necessary manpower, & information necessary. He asked David Slack to contact Rick Karney about gaining background information.

Don asked about the best date for the next meeting as the 2nd Tuesday would be after the Town Meeting & the next Tuesday would be the election. The 2nd Wednesday was decided upon: Wednesday, May 11.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00PM. The next meeting will be held on May 11 in the Skaket Room at 7:00PM. Please bring agenda and minutes and notify the chair if you cannot attend.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Slack